RNA FOR A BETTER LIFE IN THE HEIGHTS

RIVERVIEW Neighborhood Association

232 Ogden Avenue — Jersey City, N.J. 07307 — (201) 798-0493

APRIL 1988

RNA IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH ANY POLITICAL PARTY, ORGANIZATION OR ELECTED OFFICIAL.

MEETING MINUTES

The R.N.A. had expected to have Mr Michael Barnes of the city Dept. of Engineering as a guest speaker at the March meeting. Unfortunately Mr Barnes was recovering from emergency surgery, and was unable to attend. The absence of the main speaker did not lessen the interest or the impact of this meeting. Regular committee reports were given by Randy Sanford, Maria Tuzzo speaking on behalf of Carin Lewis, Anne Hart, Mike Moloughney and Dean Howell. As usual R.N.A. chairman Vito Brunetti had much information to relate to the members, regarding some city-wide projects that hs is monitoring as our representative.

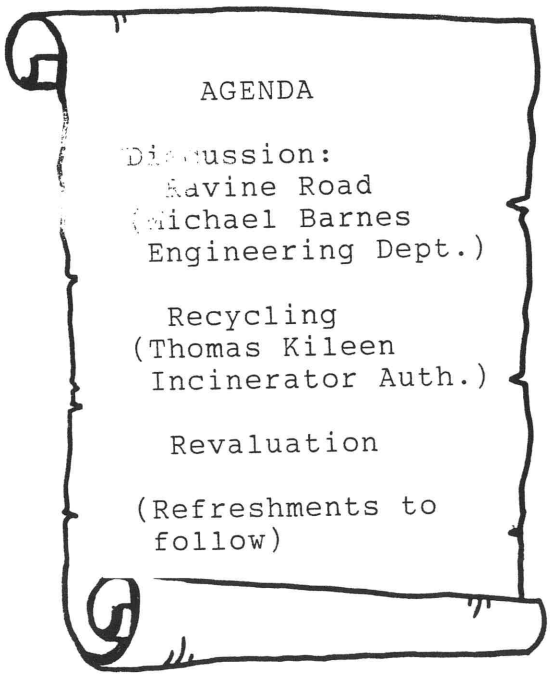
Issues under discussion were the rehab at 102-108 Ogden Ave, the demolition of 348 Ogden Ave; our 3rd annual Flea Market (June 11th); neighborhood clean-up week-end (June 4th & 5th); our civilian park patrol; crime watch in our neighborhood and the immediate surrounding area. The membership was introduced to David Malms, a young local resident, who is trying to earn his eagle scout badge. To do so he must devise, supervise and complete a community project. David will propose his project at our next meeting and organize its implimentation.

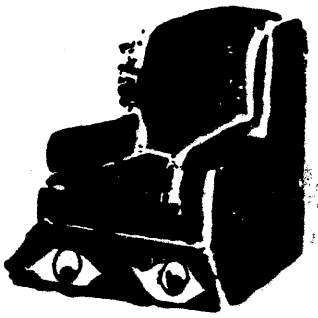
We had a few visitors who are developing property in our area, and we also added several new names to our membership list. One of the visiting developers was the winner of our monthly 50/50 drawing and donated his winning share to the R.N.A. treasury. Many thanks to Walter Nacnodovitz.

Please join us next month. Along with Michael Barnes, our guest speaker will be Tom Kileen of the Incinerator Authority. The primary discussion, however, will be the tax situation. The next meeting will be Tuesday, April 12, 7:30p.m. at the Harborview Health Care Center.

Secretary

Maria E. Tuzzo





Under the Chair

We would like to devote this issue of our newsletter to a discussion of our city's recent revaluation of our real estate properties. In March, the majority of our community received a letter from Real Property Appraisers (RPA)informing property owners of their new assessments. This market value price is the figure against which the city will multiply its new tax rate to arrive at our tax bill.

Of course there is a lot of controversy and confusion about this process. The following articles, opinions and charts are a sample of the information that is being discussed publicly throughout the city. R.N.A. members need to get involved in this debate, which will be on the agenda at our April 12 meeting.

ITEM ONE: "REVALUATION" STIRS FEAR OF TAX HIKE (SOURCE: Jersey Journal, March 7, 1988) by Bill Campbell

For some people, the news that their home has increased 33 times in value in only 18 years would be welcome news.
But that's not the case for many Jersey City residents who fear that rising home values - the result of a court-ordered property revaluation - will mean a whopping tax increase this year.
Revised property assessments, which were mailed to property owners last week, have prompted some homeowners to fear a massive tax increase that will force them to sell their homes.
According to Jersey City Tax Assessor Peter Casamassino, the revaluation, which brings all property up to 100 percent of its true value, will result in an average five-fold property increase throughout the city.
For now, officials have adopted a simple formula to determine whether the increase in property values will result in municipal tax increases. They say that dwellings that increase by six times or less will probably not experience a tax hike.
However, officials warn they can not develop a more accurate formula until municipal, county and school budgets are struck.
Meanwhile, homeowners in the areas greatly affected by the 1980s real estate boom, like the Downtown and Heights sections, can expect much larger increases, according to Jos. Pizzoli, the project manager for Real Property Appraisers.
In some cases the increases in property value can be as high as 20 to 33 times.

State law mandates that municipalities revalue residential, commercial and industrial property every ten years.
A handbook given to assessors by the state Division of Taxation says revaluation "seeks to spread the tax burden equitably within a taxing district by appraising each property according to its true value and assessing it based on such value."

The process will not generate a financial windfall for the municipality since taxes will simply be spread out differently, not increased.
The appraisal firm bases its updated assessment on certain details like home improvements and the market sales of a particular neighborhood. However, since Jersey City last conducted a revaluation in 1970, current assessments do not reflect the frenzy of activity which occurred in the county's real estate market.
Some homes in Downtown which were assessed at $12,000 in 1970 are worth more than $250,000 in today's market. Others in the Heights that were assessed at $12,000 may now be worth more than $150,000. Consequently, property is assessed at 23 percent its true value while the tax rate of $182 per $1,000 of assessed valuation is among the highest in the state.
But the tax pendulum should swing the other way once the revaluation is completed. When property values are brought to true value the tax rate is expected to drop to about $30 per $1,000 of assessed valuation, according to Pizzoli.

The revaluation is expected to be good news to owners of condominiums and other newly constructed dwellings whose property is assessed at slightly higher than the 23 percent ratio. Owners of those properties have been paying higher taxes which, in affect, have subsidized the undervalued properties.
The same scenario will be true for neighboring Hoboken which has not been revalued since 1970. The affects of gentrification on the mile-square city have touched nearly every property and Pizzoli, whose firm is conducting that revaluation, estimates that assessments will exceed the ratio of Jersey City. Ina statment issued last week, Pizzoli said Hoboken properties will increase an average of 15 times in value. As in Jersey City, the revaluation is expected to have a dramatic impact on fixed-income property owners. The city's tax assessor has estimated a 1988 municipal tax rate of $20 per $1,000 of assessed valuation.

Bayonne and Secaucus are also conducting property revaluation.
The owner of a two-family house on Lincoln Street said his property has gone up 15.3 times in value, from $9,000 in 1970 to $138,000 this year. He said the increase in the assessment, given the projected tax rate of $30 per $1,000 of assessed valuation, will boost taxes on that property from $1,648 last year to $4,140 this year.
The property owner says he is skeptical of the revaluation process, claiming no one ever inspected his house. "My theory is that, since most of the houses on the block are three-family, they just looked at a few and assumed mine was too."
Property owners can appeal their assessments with Real Property Appraisers this week by scheduling hearing with the firm at their offices at Gregory Towers at 270 Henderson Street, according to Pizzoli.
Downtown, an Erie Street resident who also asked not to be identified, said his assessment has increased 25 fold from $3,000 in 1970 to $75,000 today. That's a tax increase of $1,700 from last year.
"I'm living on retirement benefits and some savings," said the man in his 70s. "I'm afraid to speak up because I don't want to be punished any more. I've been told I can sell the house and move away, but I've lived here all my life and they'll have to take me out kicking and screaming."

ITEM TWO: Letter to the Editor (Source: Jersey Journal) by John Hale

It is important for everyone to know what all their neighbors' new property tax valuations are, to be sure the revaluation process in Jersey City has not been applied unfairly.
To see why that statement is true, let's start by figuring out what the new tax rate is likely to be, and then see how much each of us will be expected to pay. If you are going to pay more than your neighbor for the same-sized residential property, that is unfair, and you should **challenge the valuation.**
The new tax rate can be expected to be about $45 per $1,000 of valuation calculated as follows: The average city property was valued at about 25% of its real market price at the end of 1987. The revaluation is designed to increase that value to 100% of the market price; so the valuation of the average city property will increase about four times (25% times 4 = 100%) Since the city is not increasing or decreasing its revenues from property taxation in this process, the new rate should be one fourth of what it currently is or about $45 per $1,000 ($182.11 divided by 4 equals $45).
Let me explain what that means to me as a home owner downtown. Last year I paid $4,700 in property taxes on a valuation of $26,000. The city's appraisal company has just proposed a valuation of $315,6000 for my home, which, at the projected tax rate, means I would be expected to pay $14,200 in property taxes.
Now you can see why it is so important to find out what your neighbors' valuations are. If your neighbors' properties are about the same size, their valuations should be just about the same as yours. You and your neighbors should pay about the same amount of tax, but it is not working out that wav.
One of my neighbors, a block away and having a slightly larger home, has been valued at $120,000 which will probably mean a tax of $5,400.
Knowing that, we can see that it is obviously unfair for me to be expected to pay $14,200 for a similar property: that's 2½ times more tax.
Meet with your neighbors to find out what's going on and file your appeals if the system has unfairly appraised your property.

ITEM THREE: APPRAISER TELLS HOW REVAL WAS ACCOMPLISHED (SOURCE: Jersey Journal, March 21, 1988) by Jim DeRogatis

The recent property revaluations in Jersey City and Hoboken have many residents wondering how the cities' assessor determined that the homes they bought for $15,000 are now worth $300,000.

Real Property Appraisers, a nationwide firm based in Dayton, conducted both the Jersey City and Hoboken revaluations. Neither city has been revalued since 1970, and many properties were on the tax rolls at a fraction of their worth.

Property values have risen dramatically in both cities over the last 18 years as a result of the "Gold Coast" real estate boom. The revaluation brings homes and businesses up to their current market worth, and although the tax rates will decrease, many residents can expect large tax increases.

Joseph Pizzoli, project manager for Real Property, said Jersey City and Hoboken are unusual cases. Most of the cities the company has revalued in New Jersey increased in value four times, while property values rose six times in Jersey City and 15 times in Hoboken.

Pizzoli has been in the assessment business since 1968 and has revalued cities and counties in states across the country.

In New Jersey, Real Property has revalued, among others, Toms River, Lakehurst, Beachwood and Bound Brook. Tax assessors in Lakehurst and Beachwood both expressed satisfaction with the firm's work.

"Some people believe that we just pull these numbers out of the air," Pizzoli said. "But we are making objective appraisals based on a number of factors."

One factor is the county's record of recent sales of buildings, Pizzoli said. Real Property's first step in revaluing both Jersey City and Hoboken was to plot recent sales on maps of all property in the city, which gave the firm an idea of what homes and businesses are worth on the market.

Both cities were divided into a number of "neighborhoods" based on the average selling price of buildings in an area. Property in Downtown Jersey City has been selling for much more than property near the Bayonne border. Property near Washington Street in Hoboken has sold for considerably more than property near the Palisades.

As Real Property's appraisers set new values for property, they checked the numbers against the actual selling price of similar buildings in the surrounding neighborhood, Pizzoli said. The method helps assure that buildings are being revalued at close to 100 percent of their worth. A second tool used by the firm is field inspections. Ten local residents were hired, trained and sent out to examine Jersey City and Hoboken door by door.

"There's an old joke that the three most important factors in valuing real estate are location, location and location," Pizzoli said. Property in historic neighborhoods close to the PATH system were usually valued highest.

In addition to location, Real Property inspectors looked at the size of the property, construction materials, the age of the building, its condition, the heating system, the number of stories and the number of units.

If a homeowner or tenant was not home to let a field inspector into a building on his first visit, he returned later in the day or the next day, Pizzoli said. If he still could not get in, he left a card for the homeowner to set an appointment.

When a field inspector could not get into a building, he filed an estimate of its worth based on an exterior examination. Pizzoli said the number of units in a building and many other factors can usually be determined just by looking at the building, counting doorbells and mailboxes and comparing it to similar buildings in the neighborhood.

If the firm never heard from the homeowner to set up an appointment, the estimate was mailed to him to correct anything that might have been wrong, Pizzoli said.

Many Jersey City and Hoboken homeowners have complained that they were never visited by a Real Property field inspector. A Downtown Jersey City group is attempting to block the city from accepting the firm's revaluation, claiming that Real Property did not do a fair and thorough job.

"There are going to be mistakes. We're only human," Pizzoli said. The company is still in the process of correcting its figures, and the revaluations will not be final until they are presented to the city tax assessors about a month from now.

Real Property has been meeting with Jersey City and Hoboken homeowners who believe their assessments are unfair. Pizzoli said many residents come to the meetings and complain that a similar house next door was valued less.

But instead of adjusting the value of the complainant's home down, the appraisers often notice a mistake in the neighbor's appraisal and adjust the value of his home up. Homeowners can expect notice in the mail in the next few weeks on whether their assessments have changed as a result of the meetings.

When the Hoboken revaluation is presented to the assessor, the city will also receive a video with color images of every property in Hoboken. The film was made by Landisc, a subsidiary of Real Property, and is expected to be a valuable aide to the tax assessor as well as the city's Police, Fire and Planning departments.

Jersey City declined to purchase the laser video because of the additional cost, Pizzoli said.

Real Property was paid $460,000 to revalue Hoboken's 1.4 square miles and $1.8 million to revalue Jersey City, which is about 13 times as large.

The firm is responsible for defending its figures before the County Board of Taxation for the next two years, and Real Property will continue to be a presence in Hudson County.

The company bid on both the Bayonne and Union City revaluations, although the work was awarded to other companies. Bayonne and Union City are at the initial stages of their revaluations.

ITEM FOUR: REVALUATION WILL RAISE RENTS (Source: Jersey Journal, March 16, 1988) by Jim DeRogaris

Renters may not get tax bills in the mail, but they will probably bear the brunt of any tax increase their landlords receive because of property revaluations in Jersey City and Hoboken.

Both cities recently completed court-ordered revaluations of property for the first time since 1970. Buildings have been undervalued in many areas, but the revaluation is designed to bring the assessed value of each property up to its current market worth.

Homes and businesses in some sections of Jersey City and Hoboken have increased in value 20 times or more. Tax rates in both cities will decrease proportionately, but Jersey City homeowners whose property increased in value more than six times and Hoboken homeowners whose property increased more than 15 times in the revaluation are likely to experience dramatic tax increases.

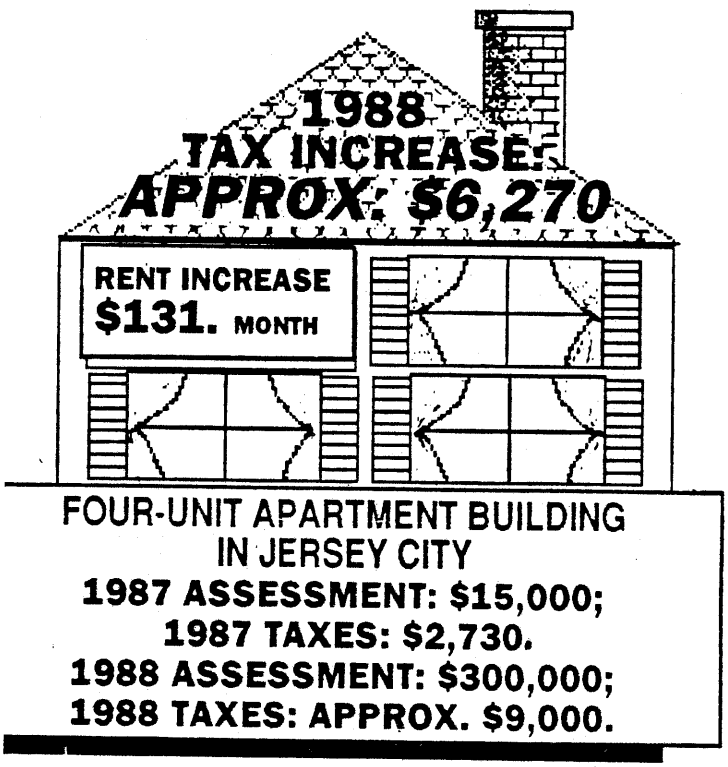
Fixed-income homeowners who cannot afford to pay their new tax bills may be forced to sell. But tenants in multi-unit buildings will also be hurt.

Landlords in Hoboken can pass their tax increases along to their tenants. Many tenants face rent increases ranging from $50 to $200 a month, in addition to the annual 4 percent cost of living increase allowed by law.

Jersey City rent control laws offer tenants in buildings with five units or more some protection, but tenants in smaller buildings may also absorb their landlords' tax increases.

Hoboken's rent control law allows landlords to divide a tax increase by the number of units in their building and pass it along to the tenants, according to city Rent Levelling Officer Lourdes Arroyo.

"Right now, tenants pay the difference between the landlord's 1972 taxes and the present taxes. Under the formula we have now, the landlord can take the difference between '72 and the present, divide it by 12 months and the number of units, and pass that along to tenants," Arroyo said.



Arroyo said Hoboken tenants currently pay about half of a landlord's taxes. Tenants will be paying an even greater portion of the taxes after landlords pass along their rent increases.

Jersey City's rent control laws do not allow landlords to automatically pass along their tax increase to tenants, according to Charlotte Halley-Mizzi, the administrator of Jersey City's Rent Levelling office.

However, landlords can file a hardship application with the Rent Levelling Board to win approval for a rent hike. Halley-Mizzi said she does not anticipate an increase in the number of hardship applications, but other city officials predicted a dramatic jump.

Halley-Mizzi noted that the city's rent control law applies only to buildings with five units or more. Landlords of buildings with four units or fewer are free to raise tenants' rents as they please, without city approval. As an example of the impact the revaluation will have on tenants, a four-unit building in Jersey City that was assessed at $15,000 in 1987 paid $2,730 in taxes, based on the tax rate of $182 per $1,000 of assessed valuation.

The building may have increased in assessed value 20 times with the recent revaluation and now be assessed at $300,000. Jersey City officials project a tax rate of about $30 per $1,000 of assessed valuation. That means the building's owner could be paying $9,000 in taxes in 1988.

That $6,270 tax increase, divided by 12 months and four units, means tenants in each apartment could be asked to pay an additional $131 rent a month.

The tax increase would have less of an effect on larger buildings. An eight-unit apartment building in Hoboken with an assessed value of $25,000 in 1987 paid about $5,250 in taxes, based on the tax rate of $210 per $1,000 of assessed valuation.

The assessed value may have increased to $500,000 with the revaluation. Hoboken officials project a $20 tax rate per $1,000 of assessed valuation, meaning the building would pay about $10,000 in taxes in 1988.

The $4,750 tax increase, divided among eight units, would mean an additional $49.50 rent per tenant each month.

City officials say there is a strong need for some sort of relief from the revaluation, especially for tenants in smaller apartment buildings.

"The effects of this are unconscionable," said Hoboken tenant advocate Thomas Oliveri. "It means a lot more rent for tenants. Some people will be forced from this city."

Jersey City Tax Assessor Peter Casamasino said the landlords are "caught between a rock and a hard place." Many cannot afford to pay the additional taxes, so they must pass them along to their tenants, he said.

"There is definitely a need for state aid to offset the effects of the revaluation," Casamasino said. "The governor said he has been holding surplus funds for a rainy day. Well, it's raining now in Jersey City and Hoboken."

ITEM FIVE:

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
ASSESSMENT DIVISION . . . .
Dear Taxpayer:
In response to some of the more general questions regarding the 1988 city wide revaluation mandated by the Hudson County Board of Taxation:
(1) Do not multiply your new market value (Assessment) by the current general tax rate.
(2) For Comparison Purposes Only: Theoretically if your new market value (1988 revaluation figure) has increased by five times compared to your current (1987 assessment) you may not see an increase in tax dollars on your new 1988 tax bill. This is assuming there is no increase in the City, County, and school budget for 1988.
(3) If you feel your new value (1988 revaluation figure) exceeds true market value as of October 1, 1987 I strongly recommend mailing in your post card (which was enclosed with notice of value) to Real Property Appraisers (the revaluation firm) to arrange for an appointment to discuss your new market value (1988 assessment)
(4) Please bring sufficient documentation (proof) that your house would not sell or was not worth the new market value per the revaluation notice as of October 1, 1987. Eg. Proof included:
(a) Houses similar to yours that sold for less; this does not include sales from one family member to another or sales of properties sold at City auction. Proof can be obtained from either the Hudson County Register's Office (Deeds) or your local real estate offices; (b) Structural damage that cannot be repaired or can be repaired but at a great expense.
(5) If you choose to waive your informal hearing you still have the right to file a tax appeal with the Hudson County Board of Taxation, 595 Newark Avenue, Jersey City, N.J. 07306 on or before August 15, 1988. It is very possible the filing date will be extended one month to September 15, 1988. (You should wait until the new tax bills are issued in July before you file)
(WE RECOMMEND YOU MAIL IN YOUR CARD TO REQUEST AN INFORMAL HEARING)
(6) We do not know the exact effect the revaluation will have in actual tax dollars at present on your new 1988-1989 tax bill. This will be better known after school, City and County Budgets are adopted and after all the informal hearings are complete and the exact ratable base is known.
(7) The revaluation was mandated (ordered) by Hudson County Board of Taxation.
(8) The New Market Value does represent your 1988 assessment.
If you have any questions please write Mr. Joseph Pizzoli or the Tax Assessor.

Peter A. Casamasino
Assessor

Addresses. . . .
1 -- Mr. Joseph Pizzoli, Project Mgr.
Real Property Appraisers
P. O. Box 3275
Jersey City, N. J. 07302

2 -- Assessment Division
Department of Finance
City Hall
280 Grove Street
Jersey City, N.J. 07302

ITEM SIX: Letter to the Editor (Source: Jersey Journal, March, 1988)

Even though I am a Heights resident, I had the pleasure of attending on March 9 a meeting at St. Michael's Church in reference to revaluation of property.

While litigation is going on, an injunction should be issued against revaluation of property in order to ensure our rights under due process of law.

It is mandatory that all neighborhood block associations write in a common cause since we are all affected by the proposed changes in the tax structure.

The taxpayer has two options; if you have mustard in your blood, sit back and enjoy the experience. Remember the rape of the taxpayer.

If you have red blood flowing through your veins, give it your best shot. Don't give up. Fight to the end.

I'm sure the JCNA or Van Vorst Park Association will cooperate with other block organizations in order to present a united front in a court of law. — S.K., Jersey City

JERSEY CITY COALITION FOR FAIR TAXATION

P.O.B. 13013, Jersey City, NJ, 07303

We Encourage You to Appeal Your Assessment

The Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation wants to encourage all property owners to appeal their assessment. There is the possibility, via the Real Property Appraisers' (RPA) appeal, of lowering one's taxes. But also important, by going to your appeal and asking a few questions (outlined below), you can help the Coalition do critical research concerning the quality of RPA's work. This will help us in our fight to have the problems with the revaluation addressed.

Ask the Following Questions--and Write Down RPA's Answers

1) "What is your (the RPA representative's) name?"

2) "Did anyone from RPA ever inspect my home?"

3) "May I see the Property Record Card for my house?" (This card describes the physical characteristics of your house, and forms the basis for RPA's appraisal. Jot down everything it states about your house in the below space. If RPA cannot for some reason produce your card, ask instead for the RPA representative to verbally describe everything they know about your house. Demand that they be specific; don't them get away with generalities or with saying just one or two things and then trying to brush off your question. Write down what they say and later, when you are at home, write down true or false next to their various descriptions about your house. For example: if they say 'wood structure,' and your house is brick, write 'wood/false'.)

4) "What recent house sales in my area are you using for comparison purposes?"

5) "Can I see your revaluation list for my area so that I can see how others in my area have been assessed?" (Write down the lot and block number, and corresponding assessment values, of as many properties as you are permitted to see.)

Now You Do Some Talking

Now that you know what RPA knows--and doesn't know--about your house, if you feel their assessment is too high, tell them. If you feel the houses they are using for comparison purposes are inappropriate, let them know. If you have a good case, they're supposed to take what you say into consideration. (Whether they do or not is another question.)

But in any regard, please do send in the above information. It will help us greatly as we investigate inequities in the current revaluation. You can just fold this form, stick it in an envelope, and mail it to us at the address above. Please do include your name, address, and phone in case we have to get back to you with questions.

ITEM SEVEN:

(The following is a statement written by Councilman Tom Hart concerning the Tax Revaluations)

There is much confusion and fear because of the recent release of the reassessment figures in Jersey City. In addressing that situation, I propose the following:

1. A "staging" or "phasing in" of the revaluation figures. That would allow the City to meet its obligations of reassessment. The City failed to meet those obligations in the past and that failure is the direct cause of the dramatic rise in assessments and in what will be the tax increases. Thus, it is the City's obligations to address the problems caused thereby. However, this is not to place blame or to risk penalty. Rather it is to take the lead in developing REAL SOLUTIONS while still meeting the laws. The staging or phasing would allow for property value increases but on a rational basis, allowing for gradual and affordable increases both in taxes and rents. Of course, this will require enabling state legislation which can and should be adopted on a basis of emergency. The emergency is the very real prospect of homeowners and renters to be unable to meet their financial obligations resulting in the attendant penalties.

2. The City establishing a "Deferral Payment" system. We already allow for deferred payments based on emergencies. The structure should be the same as exists and should only allow for deferral of taxes caused by the reval increase. It should be on an individual case by case basis. If that requires additional clerical or other staff, then we can and should hire such staff. The entire situation should allow for additional or reappropriated utilization of state aid or other grant monies.

3. There should be established a "Revolving Loan" program. This can be patterned after the N.H.S. programs of low interest or no interest loans to persons affected by the tax increases related to the reval. This program is most ideally suited to persons who are senior citizens or who are on fixed incomes. However, it must be stated that even persons of regular and substantial income are impacted upon by this situation and they also need help. Another problem is that related to bank held mortgages which means even greater burden for residents because they may have to come up with "security" type payments. A person in the downtown area will increase $11,000. in tax payments and will have to match that figure for her bank. This is a tremendous burden.

The money for a revolving loan fund can come from the affordable housing trust fund, for one. Certainly, many homes, especially those of seniors or people who don't have very high incomes, cannot AFFORD to stay in their homes under the current situation. This "Trust Fund" should first be utilized to allow residents who have lived here a long time to stay here before we worry about bringing new people in. I also believe that developers might be a little more attuned to this situation because of its very real emergent nature. I cannot imagine anyone opposing this proposal since it is directed at assisting both property owner and renter.

4. I am proposing a "Freeze" on the City budget and the Board of Education budget. In the City, the previous two years $47.00 increase certainly can be reappropriated in direction to meet increasing needs.

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Since many employees live in Jersey City, they must be willing to make salary raise sacrifices in the face of increased taxes or rents on their homes. Those who live outside of town must, for once, become aware of the acute situation in this city. We cannot afford to keep increasing salaries which go to paying taxes in other cities when our residents are having a hard time paying in this town. Charity, after all, does begin at home.

As to the Board of Ed, I am proposing that monies again be reappropriated, most especially from non instructional spending to instructional and curricular. The State has not mandated any program or situation which will increase the tax burden. The state mandated programs can and should be met from within by appropriations from such funds as the seven million dollar transportation fund, for example. And frivolous or luxury spending must cease and desist immediately - no new cars, less use of the cars to impact on fuel, travel and convention expenses, et cetera, can all be redirected at curricular needs such as books, equipment, et cetera. The thirty five million dollar increases again provide enough money. It just has to be reappropriated appropriately.

5. I have already addressed the Freeholders about the proposed raises in the County and very strongly opposed them at this time. I would also ask that the Freeholders meet their obligations by freezing their budget also. After all, they represent a large part of our municipal budgets, Jersey City pays over twenty million dollars a year to the county and, right now, we can't afford that.

These are times of unique turmoil and they demand strongly responsible government management. The party is over and we must take strong affirmative measures to meet our legal responsibility to the lives and monies of our people and of even greater importance, we must meet our moral and ethical obligations to their minds and hearts.

I would also request that the local real estate industry, people whose rights I have always defended, take a very responsible attitude and insure that none of their employees CAPITALIZE on the current fears of our people. They should and could be a big help in addressing and allaying the fears by explaining the situation.

I have held meetings for the people in The Heights. Those meetings were on Monday, March 21, 7 p.m. at Public School #8 and Wednesday, March 23, 7 p.m. at Public School #25. Tax Assessor Casamassino and I hosted those meetings and explained the process, appeals, options, et cetera as well as answered questions or addressed particular situations. Mr. Pizzoli of RDA was also present at both meetings.

Additionally, although I support the efforts of those who are engaged in questioning the reval process and results, I offer a few thoughts. If there is a basis for litigation against RPA (Real Property Appraisers), the resident should not have to pay for that litigation. Because the City is the entity which engaged in contract with RPA, The City is the entity which already has recourse, both contractual and legal, and the City should pursue any necessary or rightful course of action.

I would also advise, however, that we be extremely careful in that which we seek from RPA. My belief is very strong and based on much experience that any new assessment will result in even HIGHER assessments than the present figures. My point is that we must investigate every aspect of the process to be sure of accuracies but that we must not go headlong into something which might, in fact, worsen the situation for the payer.

ITEM EIGHT: THERE MAY BE RELIEF (Source: Jersey Journal, March 16, 1988) by Jim DeRogatis

Hudson County's delegation to the state Legislature is exploring three options to relieve homeowners and tenants of the burden imposed by revaluation.

Property values in Hoboken and Jersey City have risen dramatically in the 18 years since the last revaluation, and many property owners are facing steep tax hikes. Fixed-income homeowners and senior citizens could be forced to sell their homes because of the larger tax bills.

Local government does not have the power to freeze taxes or offset the effects of the revalutions. Tax relief must come from the state.

Hoboken Assemblyman Bernard Kenny Jr. said Hudson County legislators are exploring three forms of relief from the revaluation, including:

- Phasing in the revaluation over a period of three to five years. The difference in taxes would be made up by state aid to distressed cities.
- Deferral of taxes for fixed-income senior citizens or handicapped homeowners. The state would pay the difference in taxes and collect the balance upon the resident's death. Sen. Thomas Cowan of Jersey City has already drafted a bill setting the plan in motion.
- Revenue annuity. This plan would establish a sort of mortgage whereby banks would pay fixed-income homeowners' taxes. The homeowners would pay a set amount to the bank, with the balance due upon the resident's death or sale of the home.

State aid to New Jersey cities has decreased steadily during the Kean administration. Kenny, a Democrat, admits that it will be difficult to convince the Republican administration to provide Hoboken and Jersey City with property tax relief.

"The taxpayers are going to have to rise up and make sure their needs are known in Trenton," Kenny said. "We are talking about preserving the middle class in Hoboken and Jersey City."

ITEM NINE: THE SHOT HEARD ROUND THE CITY (Source: Jersey City Reporter, March 13, 1988) Kevin M. Meyer

Years from now, local historians may look back and remember Wednesday, March 9, 1988 as the night the revolution began--the Jersey City reval revolt--the night when hundreds of Downtown colonists decided they would rather fight the pending revaluation of properties than move out of the city.

In the last two weeks, property owners in Jersey City have been receiving notices of revaluation and new property assessments from Real Property Appraisers, the firm contracted by the city at a cost of $1.8 million to complete the reval. Complaints on RPA's tallies have been scattered in most of the city but, in Downtown where some residents have witnessed 500 percent increases in their assessments, some residents seem prepared to take up arms--legal arms--to fight the city, RPA and the pending tax increase.

The Downtown Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (DCNA), which includes representatives from four Downtown neighborhoods: Paulus Hook, Van Vorst, Harsimus Cove, and Hamilton Park, sponsored Wednesday's meeting to answer questions about the reval and enlist neighborhood support to as one member put it, "evaluate the reval." DCNA organizers had hoped for a solid turnout for the meeting, but admitted being overwhelmed by the crowd of over 700 that was forced by its size to look over one another's shoulders at the handouts distributed.

Despite the large crowd and the tension in the room, fueled by the anxiety of those present, speakers were greeted by an attentive audience which applauded every anti-tax, anti-administration comment tossed out. A mix of seniors, lifelong residents and newcomers listened as DCNA speakers explained the reval ("bringing the property value up to full market value"); its result, the new assessment ("what a group thinks a piece of property is worth"); and its possible impact on the city's tax rate.

By some estimates, the current $181 tax rate (per assessed valuation) could plummet to between $30 and $35 with the reval. While that may sound like good news on the surface, the rate applied to the new higher assessments will likely cause headaches for many *(see chart)*. Because much of the property in Downtown was far below true market value, increases in that area have been most drastic. Assessments, last adjusted in 1970, have failed to keep up with the growth in market values, leaving current residents to bear the brunt of the massive increases.

Judging from the sentiments at Wednesday's meeting, residents don't plan on ante-ing up without a fight.

Sue the @#*&$%!

"We're not going to take the abuse any longer, they've been dumping on us for too long," said Audrey Winkler of Van Vorst Park. With fighting words like these, Winkler dropped the biggest bomb during the 2-hour meeting. She announced the formation of a non-profit organization, the Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation, which plans to file suit against the City of Jersey City and Real Property Appraisers and which charges the reval is invalid.

News of the suit brought instant applause from almost everyone, including Harsimus Cove resident Guy Catrillo, who later told the crowd, "If we have to sue these ignorant asses who don't care what they do to other people's lives, we will."

After the initial clamor quieted Winkler, reluctantly at first, explained that the legal action could cost as much as $50,000. With little prodding, audience members immediately responded by offering donations to fund the suit and the meeting, for a few moments, resembled an auction.

"I'll pledge $250 right now," said one older man.

"I'll give $300," another woman said in broken English, her voice cracking as she tried to be heard.

Check the tote board

"Who do I make the check out to?" asked an anonymous voice from towards the back of the room. Calls and offers continued as DCNA members, surprised by the call and response fundraising quickly tried to record names and addresses. Pledges were later accepted as the audience exited. Winkler said $37,000 was pledged by meeting's end. DCNA representatives hope, by Sunday, to collect enough pledges to meet with attorneys Monday when they will present a $30,000 retainer. A contract with the as yet unnamed firm, Winkler said, could be signed by later this week.

Winkler said the decision to file suit came after many residents complained that their homes were never visited by RPA representatives. While a few stood up to tell the crowd of their experiences with the appraisers, the majority of those present insisted their homes were never visited, reasoning that this, itself, makes it difficult for RPA to be accurate in its assessments.

"On my block alone, the difference in values varies from between $60,000 and $150,000--on the same block," Winkler said. Another thing Winkler says she can't understand is why a larger property on a corner lot near her home is assessed lower than her home. Winkler's Van Vorst neighborhood, Tax Assessor Peter Casamasino admits, is one of the area's hardest hit by the reval.

Cont'd. Pg. 10

The final solution

DCNA members said the lawsuit seemed to be their only option after neighborhood leaders studied the alternatives. Jeni Branum of Hamilton Park contacted elected state officials on the group's behalf but said, even they were stumped by the problem. "Elected officials don't have the answers for us," Branum said. She discounted the advice of State Senator Tom Cowan, who Branum said told her, that seniors citizens could be protected from the reval under certain legislation.

"We need a package deal for everyone," said Branum.

The obvious alternative, the appeal process which gives every taxpayer the right to contest their new assessment, first before RPA representatives and then before the County Board of Taxation in August, could help individuals, Branum said, but that wouldn't be enough. One of the coalition's goals is to make the city more accountable to the taxpayers. The lawsuit is part of that effort, Branum said.

"Why are we taxed?" asked John Lester, president of the Paulus Hook Neighborhood Association. "To make government work...what are we getting for our taxes? "NOTHING," the audience shouted back.

"This whole effort is more than a question of assessments and revaluations, its our chance to look at the way the city operates," Lester explained. DCNA spokespersons encouraged taxpayers to attend council meetings, particularly those where the budget is discussed, and ask why money is being spent, line-by-line.

Others blamed their tax woes on a number of sources, ranging from tax abatements for many of the city's waterfront developments to unusually low assessments for commercial properties.

Downtown Councilman Jaime Vasquez, who was greeted with loud boos and catcalls when he addressed the crowd, admitted that mistakes were made in the reval process and offered to help residents with unfair reassessments.

"We have to correct these problems together, we're in the same boat," Vasquez said, pointing to his own brushes with the reval. "My father-in-law owns a one-family wood frame house on Montgomery Street. His property value went from $6,000 to $165,000 under the reval...he's here tonight and he's asking me many of the same questions you people are," Vasquez said.

Also with Vasquez Wednesday was Tax Assessor Casamasino and Joseph Pizzoli, project manager for RPA, both of whom had earlier asked meeting organizers to address the crowd. Their offer was declined, said a DCNA official, because they felt the two would only try to placate the crowd with a "don't worry" approach.

Vasquez, despite his rocky opening, was able to draw some positive response from the group assembled Wednesday night. As he tried to convince the crowd that he was sincere in his concern, Vasquez said "I was going to announce it in May, but I might as well tell you tonight, I'm not seeking reelection." To that statement, the audience erupted.

What you will pay

The taxes that you pay each year can be figured by multiplying your assessment by the tax rate. Each homeowner has received or will soon receive their 1988 assessment. The tax rate is set by the city each year. The current tax rate is approximately $182 per $1000 of assessment value.

The exact tax rate for this year is not known now. However, Joseph Pizzoli of Real Property Appraisers, the private group that handled the reevaluation, estimates that total assessments have gone up by a factor of 5.5, which would result in a tax rate of approximately $33 per $1000. Peter Casamasino, the Jersey City tax assessor, suggests a factor of 5, which would result in a tax rate of $36.40. (These rates both assume no increase in spending by the city, schools, and county). The following table may give you an idea of what your taxes may be, subject to the above assumptions. Note, however, that the new assessments are not effective until July 1. Old assessments will be in effect until that date.

IF YOUR TAX ASSESSMENT IS:	AND THE TAX RATE IS:		
	$30	$35	$40
$50,000	$1500	1750	2000
75,000	2250	2625	3000
100,000	3000	3500	4000
125,000	3750	4375	5000
150,000	4500	5250	6000
175,000	5250	6125	7000
200,000	6000	7000	8000
225,000	6750	7875	9000
250,000	7500	8750	10000
275,000	8250	9625	11000
300,000	9000	10500	12000
325,000	9750	11375	13000
350,000	10500	12250	14000
375,000	11250	13125	15000
400,000	12000	14000	16000
425,000	12750	14875	17000

Source: Downtown Coalition of Neighborhood Associations (DCNA)

ITEM TEN: THE BACK ROOM (Source: Jersey City Reporter, March 20, 1988) by Glenn Peale and Chris Packer

Last week, in the Downtown section, the **Jersey City Coalition For Fair Taxation** fired the first crucial shot in the tax revolt that will seal the crumbling fate of the Cucci administration. And, judging from the support now flowing in from the Heights, Greenville and other parts of the city, one fact is fairly evident --- the people of Jersey City are taking no prisoners in this one.

What triggered this **"Revolution of "89"** a year early are the property reevaluations mailed to residents. The horror stories abound concerning the confiscatory taxes that will be heaped upon the property owners of the city and in many cases passed on to the 53% of the tenants who do not fall under rent control. But, for the most part, this is not the old landlord/tenant confrontation provoked by politicians seeking to cash in votes. It is --- according to many of those involved --- a story of government at its worst, officials at the height of their incompetency, and a city wandering rudderless with no course of direction. Even worse, it is a crisis that threatens to force families and people from their homes while public officials sit idly by, a sort of Nero fiddles while Rome burns.

To grasp the magnitude of how intense feelings are, consider the fact that the Fair Taxation Coalition raised cash and pledges totaling $37,000 inside of a few hours at a community meeting held at St. Michael's Church hall. A day later that total passed the $40,000 mark and within about 72 hours $25,000 in hard cash had already been collected on thosepledges. But before you get led astray by some of the political propaganda sure to appear in the press, you should know that this was not a meeting of the "yuppies" or the "newcomers." It was a meeting of the "neighborhood" --- 600 strong composed of young and old, newcomer and oldtimer, tenants and landlords, representing every ethnic, racial and economic group living in the downtown ward. Their singleness of purpose was apparent. To fight against what they consider unfair taxation and a severely flawed reevaluation process. Their message was also equally clear. They will not allow anyone to use the tools of racism or class warfare to divide them. And attempts were made in both instances to do just that.

The charter organizing group for this outpouring consisted of **Audrey Winkler**, chairperson of the J.C. Coaltion for Fair Taxation; **John Lyon**, president of the Van Vorst Park Assn.; **Erik Solberg**, who explained the official appeal process; **Janice Monson** and **Jeni Branum** of the Hamilton Park Assn.; **Brett Schundler**, vice president of the Coalition; and **Herb** and **Monica Larzalere** of the Harsimus Cove Assn.; and **John Lester**. Speaker after speaker present at the meeting revealed their assessment figures, how the assessors never visited the homes, how no two homes alike had the same assessments, how the assessors were quickly trained and ill-equipped to do the job properly.

Assessment of all this? Well, let's just say that 600 "American" residents of Downtown have banded together in a very critical and important common cause. And, let's just say that they will soon be joined by thousands more from all over the city. And, let's just say that the old political ploys of racism, divide and conquer, and playing to people's differences are not going to work here. But most of all, let us say that the Cucci Coalition and administration has finally accomplished what they always wanted to do. They have brought people together. Unfortunately for them, the arrow of solidarity is aimed right at their throats.

ITEM ELEVEN (Source Jersey City Reporter, March 27, 1988) by Helene Stapinki and Kevin M. Meyer

Revalted revolutionaries retain representation

Leaders of the Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation announced late last week that they had retained counsel in the event that they decide to sue the city and the firm that prepared the city-wide reval--the source of much of their displeasure. The announcement came at a press conference last Friday that drew the attention of all three of the New York network affiliates.

The JCCFT has hired former Newark tax assessor Saul Wolfe to represent the group in a possible lawsuit against the city and Real Property Appraisers, the firm that won a $1.8 million contract to complete the reval, the city's first since 1970. The reval has been the object of much protest, particularly from Downtown residents who charge the survey is invalid because of a wide disparity in assessments in the area.

Wolfe said he plans to appoint a committee of local residents and realtors to evaluate the reval, and, if necessary, appeal to the county and state Boards of Taxation for relief. Mayor Anthony Cucci opposes the lawsuit idea explaining that, in his opinion, the legal action will accomplish little. Cucci added that some sections of the city have not been paying their fair share of taxes for years and now the imbalance is being adjusted.

Cucci has also met with State Senator Tom Cowan (D-32nd) to discuss legislation that would protect seniors on fixed income and disabled residents from catastrophic tax bills. The pair have also discussed an amendment to the state constitution to reduce the amount of taxes that all residents would have to pay.

ITEM TWELVE: JERSEY CITY HOMEOWNERS RETAIN TOP TAX ATTORNEY (Source: Jersey Journal, March 19, 1988) by Jim DeRogatis

The Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation has hired one of the state's top tax attorneys to press for a moratorium on implementing the new assessments until local residents and realtors can work with the city to assure that the new values are fair.

The city recently completed a court-ordered revaluation of all property, the first since 1970. Homes and businesses have been dramatically undervalued, but the revalution will bring property up to 100 percent of its current market worth.

Property values increased most dramatically in the city's Downtown section and many homes multiplied in value 20 to 30 times. The city's tax rate is expected to decrease only about six-fold, so many downtown residents face steep tax hikes. The coalition "sprung up overnight from an abused and desperate citizenry ... because of a botched attempt to reassess Jersey City property," according to a statement released by the group at a press conference yesterday.

The press conference was held in the basement of St. Michael's Church at the center of Hamilton Park, one of the neighborhoods hit hardest by the revaluation, to introduce Essex County Attorney Saul Wolfe, who will spearhead the fight against the revaluation. About 250 angry residents attended the press conference. Many of the them shouted their frustration with the revaluation, frequently interrupting members of the press who tried to question Wolfe.

A former Newark tax assessor, Wolfe said he has represented Irvington, Caldwell, Linden and other cities in fights against property revaluations. He said he believes Real Property Appraisers did not conduct an equitable revaluation of Jersey City, but he offered no specific cases or evidence.

Many residents have complained at community meetings in the last two weeks that Real Property's field inspectors never entered their homes or talked with them.

"If you don't go into the homes I don't know how you're going to get the value right unless you're Superman and can see through walls," Wolfe said.

But Real Property Project Manager Joseph Pizzoli said the inspectors visited homes several times in order to get in, and forms were sent to homes where they couldn't get in so that the homeowner could cor-

Cont'd. Pg. 12

rect estimated reports. "There are going to be mistakes, we're only human," Pizzoli said. "We're trying to correct those problems now before we present our work to the tax asessor."

Pizzoli said the firm is still in the process of meeting with residents who are contesting what they believe are unfair assessments. He said that about 30 percent of the Jersey City residents who set up appointments to appeal their assessment never show up for their appointments, an unusually high figure.

The revaluation does not become official until the figures are adopted by the city tax assessor and presented to the county Board of Taxation about a month from now. Pizzoli said the downtown coalition's actions are premature, since some of the numbers might be corrected in the next few weeks. But Wolfe disagreed.

"Now is the time for immediate action," he said. "If we wait until the job is completed, it could be a costly error" since the city will have already paid Real Property's $1.8 million bill.

Wolfe said the coalition "wants two things, a good revaluation, not this one, at the right time, not now." Their "action plan" includes:

- Appointing a committee of local residents and realtors to work with the city and "look with objective standards to tell what kind of revaluation we've got;"
- Applying to the county Board of Taxation for a one-year extension on implementing the revaluation to "tie up loose ends and see that all of the residents' concerns are met;"
- Meeting with the county's delegation to the state legislature to encourage state relief from property taxes.

The legislature is expected to examine ways to relieve the property tax burden on municipalities in the coming year. Wolfe said the Jersey City revaluation should be postponed until the legislature acts.

Wolfe said that if the city does not cooperate with the coalition's requests, the group is prepared to sue. Coalition leaders hope to raise $60,000 to pay their legal bills and say they already have $35,000.

Mayor Anthony Cucci said yesterday that he does not believe a lawsuit will accomplish anything. The mayor held a press conference to respond to statements made at the coalition's press conference.

Cucci said sections of the city have not been paying their fair share of taxes for years and he offered a random sampling of recent Downtown sales to show how some buildings have been dramatically underassesed. He also took issue with a statement in the coalition's press release about "inefficient management and political patronage."

"The real corruption is when you want to shirk your (tax) responsibility," Cucci said. The mayor added that the city will not accept Real Property's work "unless we're convinced its right."

YOUR TAXES . . . .

We are the Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation:-A Few things you may not know about property re-valuation:

It's not going to be "phased-in".

In fact, it's retro-active to January 1st, 1988. This coming August you will have to not only pay at the new tax rates, but to make up "Underpayment" since the beginning of the year If you have a mortgage, you may be required to place a years tax in escrow. That means double taxes in August.

Property assessments for the entire city should have been submitted to the County Board of Taxation by January 10th, 1988 at the latest. It's almost April and the appraisal company is 2 months away from even submitting its final figures to the city let alone the county.

You won't be allowed to file an individual appeal with the County Board of Taxation unless you can pay your August tax bill in full. Even if you can pay your bill, you'll have to pay for the right to make an appeal.

WE HAVE THREE IMMEDIATE GOALS:

1)We want the assessment figures made available so we can investigate possible inequities-NOW-before we lose our homes.

2)We want a 1 year postponement of the re-valimplementation and the opportunity to see that it is done right.

3)We want an efficient and well managed government.

TO ALL WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED, THANK YOU

Every penny given will go to our continuing fight for tax justice.

The awakening is spreading city wide.

.....

COUNT ME IN

Name _____

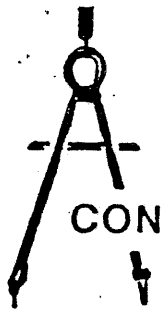
Address _____

Phone _____

I Want To Contribute $_____

Time_____

JERSEY CITY COALITION FOR FAIR TAXTATION
P. O. BOX 13013 JERSEY CITY, N.J. 07302



CONRAD'S CORNER

If the City's tax assessor had multiplied all the old assessments by six he would have come closer to 100% valuation than the one done by an out of town assessor which cost the city 1.8 million dollars or another two dollars and thirty five cents on the tax rate per thousand.

All the old tax bills itemized the cost of land and improvements. The new assessment shows only the total cost of the property. When comparing a group of buildings of the same design and size, to have a variation from $109,000 to $166,000, all of which proves that the assessor when looking over a piece of property, did not have a copy of the original assessment he could use as a guide to judge the value of the new assessment prior to the old.

With a high tax rate and low assessments most of the residents of our Riverview Neighborhood Association were able to lead a fairly comfortable life style. Some say it was like a tax abatement for homeowners, senior citizens and tenants. Now with some assessments twenty times the old, there is no way an owner will be able to hold on to his property or tenants with an assessed valuation of $36 per thousand dollars on the tax rate, all of which is an extra $2.35 per thousand alone for the cost of the reassessment or $639 for a $166,000 house.

Couldn't the reassessment be done by our own staff in city hall with a computer and then have been someone from the staff to spot check any irregularities. They could come up with a better answer than some of the out of town professionals.

We were told that with all the new Waterfront developments our taxes would remain the same and even be reduced but the opposite seems to be the case.

Even with a forty million Federal grant for infrastructure the developers were able to get a tax abatement because some of our smart city planners long ago blighted all the Waterfront land which then made them eligible for tax abatements.

We were told that even with a tax abatement we are getting more taxes than when the land was undeveloped. All of which may be true except that with inflated dollars to provide for the additional services the developers require, we now have to make up the difference with the small homeowners taxes.

In fairness to the small homeowners, (most of them senior citizens) for the past thirty or forty years who helped bail out the city in bad times, we should continue to have them remain on the old assessed valuation and the present tax rate for another two years, when all new developments will begin to pay its fair share of taxes and cause the tax rate to go down.

Now stand still little sheep if you want to make an appeal to the Hudson County Board of taxation you will be shorn of $150 for your appeal.

From the above information, R.N.A. hopes our membership begins to get an idea of this situation. No matter what you believe we ask you to do the following:

A) Help R.N.A. gather a survey of our neighborhoods new assessments. In this regard we ask you to send us a copy of the "Notice of Property Revaluation" with your new assessment. (Or bring this information with you to our next meeting.)

B) Go to RPA and ask for an informal hearing. This will give you an opportunity to find out what they based your new assessment on. Ask questions and if you are not satisfied demand an inspection of your property

C) Come to our meeting on April 11th and join our discussion.

D) Look in the newspaper for announcements of future meetings and developments.

IN MY OPINION:

The Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation is out-raged at the city and its leadership. The Coalition, made up of property owners, is in favor of 100% evaluation of property in Jersey City, provided that the revaluation is done fairly throughout the city. They are against a revaluation that would force a hardship and almost the entire tax burden on just certain sections of the city. As the group president Audrey Winkler says "We, the Coalition, are willing to pay our fair share. the operative word being fair." Ms Winkler was the principle speaker at a meeting Monday, March 21st at the VFW hall on South St.

The Jersey City Coalition brought suit against the citybecause they feel that the revaluation was conducted improperly. They hired an attorney and hope to bring this action to court long before the tax bills are due in August 1988. The general opinion of the people in attendance, about 100, was one of agreement and support. The Coalition needs volunteers for research, advertising and the collation of data as well as financial aide for legal fees.

Ms Winkler urged everyone to seek an informal hearing with Real Properties Appraisors to confirm the information that is on file concerning their property. This is not to say that your assessment will change but the information you gather may point out glaring discrepencies in the records on which the revaluation is based.

This is one time when it is important for all city residents, be they owners or tenents, to band together to bring this tax issue to an equitable conclusion. It has been proved time and time again that there is strength in numbers. Make this fight a successful one and give your support to the Jersey City Coalition for Fair Taxation. It is time for the silent majority to raise their voices along with those of their more vocal neighbors.

M. Tuzzo

In Memoriam

We deeply regret the passing of Tom Vezzetti, Mayor of Hoboken. R.N.A. wishes to extend our sympathy to his family and friends and the citizens of Hoboken. We will all miss him.

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NEIGHBORHOOD DEBATE

The following are two letters printed in the Jersey Journal concerning the crime problem around Franklin Street and Webster Avenue.

2/27/88

Defeat the Punks

This is an open letter to the decent people of Jersey City Heights, in the area of Franklin Street and all the streets around it. It's about time you stopped complaining about the trouble in the area and get off your behinds and do something about it.

Ask anyone in the area and they all know and will tell you about the drugs sold on the corner by a group of teenage punks, or how they are afraid to park their cars for fear of broken windshields or more, or having their apartments broken into.

Our area has neighborhood crime watch signs which is a laugh, because the people who do all the complaining are afraid to call even though they don't have to give their name. It's a crime watch area and that's what most people do, watch and nothing else.

The police are doing their job but they can't do it alone. We have decent American, Hispanic, Indian and other families who live here. I don't know about you but I'm tired of having my life run by a small group of junkies. We have to get together and show them we won't stand for it anymore.

They have taken over the neighborhood which is ours. Start picking up the phone when you see a crime taking place. Write down license plates, get involved. If you don't do something now, you might as well just turn over your house and car keys to these punks because by being silent and turning your back, that's just what you're doing anyway.

Wake up people of the heights. We're all neighbors and should band together like neighbors and get our neighborhood back from these punks that have it now.

Let's get a drug free neighborhood for your kids and the kids not born yet. I'm proud of Jersey City and I raised my family here. We have a good town and together I think we can keep it that way.

REFUSE TO TAKE ANYMORE - Jersey City

3/16/88

NEIGHBORS UNITE

There are residents in the area of Franklin Street that have gotten off their butts to do something about the problem of drugs and unruly gangs.

The Webster Avenue Neighborhood Association has met with Councilman Hart, Capt. Galvin of the North District police and the owners of some of the multi-family dwellings in the area to try to arrive at a solution to the problem. The association members constantly call the Police Department when noisy gangs appear at the corner of Franklin and Webster and call the Fire Department about open hydrants. We have been in touch with nearby neighborhood associations and have received positive commitments for their support.

If Refuse to Take Anymore (Your Opinion of 2/27) would attend our neighborhood association meeting in P.S. No. 8 on the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m., he or she could have an impact on ridding our neighborhood of this blight. We welcome anyone, who will help make our neighborhood and city a better place to live, to attend our meetings.

R.A. VON STADEN, PRESIDENT
WEBSTER AVENUE
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

LETTER FROM DCNA

Dear Block Association:

The Downtown Coalition of Neighborhood Association is an organization of four Downtown associations (Van Vorst Park, Historic Paulus Hook, Harimus Cove, and Hamilton Park Associations).
Since we live immediately adjacent to several of the new waterfront developments in Jersey City, we have carefully watched these developments unfold from plans and ideas to reality. Sometimes we have agreed with the Developers' plans, but when we disagreed we made our concerns known. However, we have come to appreciate the magnitude of these proposed developments and their effects -- not only on our downtown area -- but on the entire city.
For the past two years we have sponsored a DEVELOPMENT EXHIBITION. These have provided Developers with an arena in which to present their plans to the public while allowing members of the public to ask questions directly of the planners themselves.
Because of the success of our previous Exhibitions, we're sponsoring DEVELOPMENT EXHIBITION #3 to be held on Sunday, May 1st from 11 AM to 5 PM.
This year, our EXHIBITION will be in Newport Center -- a project which was only a model at the time of our first Exhibition in 1986.
We have invited more than 50 Developers and governmental agencies to participate in this event. Almost all exhibitors will be there with models, drawings and maps of their projects. Their architects and engineers will also be on hand to answer questions.
ADMISSION IS FREE.
We ask you to urge the members of your Association to attend this event. By attending, they will be able to see what is being proposed for the Jersey City waterfront and our Downtown area.

JOHN LESTER, DCNA President

March 25, 1988

A VISIT TO NEWPORT

New Jersey's latest newcomer to the mall scene is Newport Centre in Jersey City. Conveniently located by path, bus or car, it's three levels offers the amenities of shopping usually associated with similiar malls. What makes this one unique from most is its spacious modern architecture and the luxuries of its tranquil waterfalls and trees. Coming into Newport Centre reminds one of the relaxing atomsphere of a minipark, but with plenty of stores close by should you want anything.

The first two levels consist essentially of department stores like Stern's and Sears, a CVS drugstore, and smaller shops like Casual Corners, AD3, JW, Lerner's, Waldenbooks, and many others The total list, after a number of stores make their arrivals, should welcome to over eighty.

On the third level, you can really sit back and unwind after a busy day of shopping. You may want to head over to the Food Court and munch away on some of David's Cookies or, perhaps, have something a bit more substantial and healthy like a pasta salad and yogurt shake at Everything Yogurt. Whatever your palate, you should be able to find something here.

So, what do you do when your shopping bags are dragging you down? Why not head to the Odiplex Theaters? Also on third level, your most difficult task will be deciding which of the eight movies to choose from. Prices for the first showing are $3.00 for children and adults. For the next showings, children pay $3.00 and adults pay $6.00.

Like most malls today, Newport Centre likes to attract people in by scheduling car raffles, fashion shows and holiday picture shoots for children, but whatever your reason for going to Newport Centre just have fun. As that famous shopping motto goes, "Shop till you drop - or till the mall closes" Mall hours are 9-5 weekdays, 10-9:30 Saturdays, and 11-6 on Sundays.

-A. Soto

LETTER TO THE MAYOR

(The following is a complaint, that with the approval of the RNA membership, was sent to the Mayor.)
March 12, 1988

Dear Mayor Anthony Cucci:

This is to inform you of the history and most recent change in status of the notorious illegal dumpsite on Ravine Road (also known as New York Avenue) here in the Heights.

The Riverview Neighborhood Association has repeatedly made formal complaints over the last four years about the health and the motoring public using the road. To date, very little has been done to eliminate or even improve the deplorable and unsafe conditions. (In January, 1988, RNA was made aware by Michael Barnes of the Engineering Department, that during the spring the City plans to begin renovation work on this road. Mr. Barnes will be a guest speaker at our April 12th meeting to discuss this matter.)

Periodically, local papers have featured articles and photographs dramatically pointing out the conditions which include the dumping of every kind of trash, garbage, construction waste, furniture, torched autos and even dead bodies.

During the past week, City and Incinerator Authority vehicles moved into the area, we thought, to remove the debris. Actually, a "token" amount (4 dumpsters) was reportedly removed. However, most of the junk still remains. As has happened so often in the past, the cars and other refuse have been merely bulldozed from one place to another : shoved and stacked more neatly into a centralized "area for cars"....and left as a "suggestion" for the next dumper!

This time it's even worse! Tons of debris have been shoved among and around the trees in the area by the road. In addition, a passageway has been "cut" by a bulldozer creating access to an adjacent railway...apparently to provide a roadway to the dumpsite for dumping literally dozens (10 or more estimated) of empty 55 gallon drums, which also have been spread evenly among the trees.

Obviously we are concerned about the nature and source of the drums and the contamination threat they pose...as well as the threatening presence of debris that has been shoved around the trees (at some points 3 to 4 feet high).

The City's handling of this situation not only shows a disrespectful attitude toward those of us living in the neighborhood, but it also dramatically points out a fundamental ignorance and disrespect for the law and for the environment. The debris is still there, the hazards are still there, people are threatened, tax money is being used and misused and the message to illegal dumpers is one of tolerance at the worst, and indifference at the best

At our monthly meeting, Tuesday, March 8th, we voted unanimously to send you this message: this is our neighborhood and our home - not a dumpsite to be "illegally managed" by the City. We will no longer tolerate this condition! Therefore, we demand - since normal complaints have failed - that you, as Mayor, personally see to it that the appropriate city agency(s) reverse and eliminate this intolerable condition immediately!

Also, we request a letter from you outlining what we can expect in regard to this situation and your personal action.

UPDATE - PARKS COMMITTEE

The following are two position papers of the J.C. Parks Committee. They are a list of recommendations that will be discussed with each individual agency at the committee's meetings in April and are planned to be implemented this summer.

Statement of Committee Purpose

There is a bi-fold purpose to the existence of the Jersey City Parks Committee. The first is to improve, promote, establish, and systematize security in the parks of Jersey City through the Jersey City Police Department. The second is to establish a program of activities in our parks and to ensure that those programs can be implemented in well maintained and suitably equipped facilities.

The committee has categorized our City parks into three types, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and ballfields. We are primarily though not exclusively concerned with the neighborhood parks. We have so designated nine parks - Audobon, Arlington, Bayside, Columbia, Hamilton, Leonard Gordon, Lafayette, RiverView, and Van Vorst.

In regard to security, we have also established that there shall be from May through September a "Park Attendant" who will be assigned to each neighborhood park for the purposes of establishing programs of activity and to maintain overseeing the physical needs and well being of the parks. That person's presence and work will afford a liaison of security between the park and the police.

I - Jersey City Police Department

After many meetings and other informational sessions, it has been determined that the following specific recommendations be made in the form of a formal request. That suggestion has come from a meeting with late Chief John Fritz, Deputy Chief Raymond Blasczak, District Commanders James Galvin, James Cowan, and Patrick Maglione, and representative Captain Schmitt. We have also verified through Labor Relations Director exactly which of our requests are within the prerogative and permissibility of the Municipal and Departmental contracts. We appreciate the cooperation of the Department to this point and anticipate a positive result of the hours which we have all devoted to this cause.

J.C. Parks Committee Requests

1. That there be a police presence in each of the neighborhood parks on a regular basis. We request that that presence be most specifically present during the "warm weather" periods from May through the Autumn.

2. We will defer to the Department in determining personnel deployment specifics. However, we request a police person be assigned to the parks from 4:00 p.m. through 12:00 Midnight. From 12:00 Midnight, we request a regular patrol of the parks until 9:00 a.m. We request that that patrol be significantly more than a patrol car "riding through or past" on an occasional basis. We ask that the patrol be a combination of foot and vehicle patrol and that the personnel be inside of or, minimally, on the perimeter of the parks often and regularly. In the large parks - Bayside, e.g. - and in the more complex parks - Leonard Gordon, e.g. -, we request that those patrols involve police patrol in the remote and/or hidden areas of the parks. We ask that from 9:00 a.m. through 3 p.m. there be a regular patrol, combination foot and vehicular.

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3. We ask that there be a system between the foot patrols and vehicular patrols so that they do not coincide but rather that they complement each other in such a manner as to provide greater time coverage. We defer to the department as to the integration of these requests with other regular patrols if and where possible.

4. We ask that the Department dedicate its agenda specifically to the historic problems relative to urban parks in warm weather months. We ask that there be specific programs of prevention, ongoing patrol and investigation, and follow-up activity. Of these, we believe most strongly that a prevention program will make everyone's lives easier. "Nip it in the bud", if you please. We ask that specific attention be paid to narcotics in all aspects, to public drinking, to disorderly behavior including noise, to vandalistic behavior, and to the "so called little things" of graffiti and general public nuisance. We request that specific patrols or divisions be included on a special basis where applicable, narcotics division, e.g.

5. We request the availability of the Department's appropriate personnel to the "Park Attendant", most especially in May so as to meet each other and establish a relationship, so as to familiarize each with the other's role, to establish a clear and well founded basis of communication for day to day contact and for emergent situations, and so as to include each in the other's agenda and the reasons for them.

6. We request that there be implementation of whatever necessary administrative action is necessary as to make this agenda reach satisfactory implementation. If that includes, and prior meetings indicate that it will, new assignments or redeployment, then so be it.

7. We request that there be available a system whereby "Special Events" can be accommodated with whatever personnel are deemed necessary. Thus, a "Twilight Concert" might need a few personnel more than a regular evening and we ask that such extenuating circumstances be able to be addressed.

8. We request the ongoing cooperation of the department in directing the park attendants and this committee whenever their expertise indicates need for change, alteration, addition, or subtraction of the ongoing system.

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DAILY FEES

MEMBERSHIPS

2 - Recommendations to the Division of Leisure Activities and C.E.T. for the Creations of a Park Attendant Position

Employment Dates:
May 15, 1988 thru Sept. 11, 1988

The reason for these dates is to include a "pre-season" during which the person shall be liable for meeting with local area individuals, groups, schools, churches, leaders, et al for the purpose of learning the area peoples'needs and desires, demographics, and any other information and statistics which will assist in the establishment of a program of activities. This period will also allow for time to become familiar with pertinent City and other governmental agencies with whom relationship is necessary, including local police situations. This period will also allow for learning the physicality of the neighborhood park, its facilities, positives, negatives, needs and to begin address of each an all of those.

Job Summary:
The "Park Attendant" shall be to work on a full time basis for the purpose of implementing a program of leisure time activities in a specifically designated "Neighborhood Park" for the Summer months and to oversee the physical condition and facilities within the premises of that park.

Specific Duties:
The park attendant shall begin his or her employment prior to the end of the school year and shall spend the time from mid May through school closing in the activity of learning the neighborhood of that park to which he or she is assigned. Such learning shall include visits to and establishing communication with local residents individually, local resident groups, block associations, neighborhood associations, civic groups, schools and churches, and any other pertinent entity. It shall also include familiarizing oneself with the pertinent city agencies - leisure activities, public works, et al - with whom there is a natural relationship. It shall also include establishing relations with local police and establishing the appropriate procedures for ongoing security. It shall also include communication with individuals or other entities which can and should become part of the summer programs - colleges, art groups, music groups, the library, et al. This time period shall also be the period during which the actual establishment of the program agenda is devised and begun to be implemented.

The Park Attendant shall be responsible for establishing a program of leisure activities for a daily regular schedule. That program should be devised according to the needs and desires of the neighborhood and should be aimed primarily though certainly not exclusively, to children on the most daily basis as well as the entire community of that particular area on other bases.

The Park Attendant shall also be responsible for the overseeing of the physical condition of the neighborhood park in terms of ensuring that ongoing systematic maintenance is provided, repairs are quickly implemented, needed assistance is secured, and equipment is in place. He or she shall also establish particular physical needs prior to the summer season and maintain vigilance as to the provision of those needs, as possible.

The Park Attendant shall also be responsible for overseeing the general security of the park and shall do so by maintaining an ongoing intimate working relationship with

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local as well as citywide police personnel, that is the local police stationhouse and district commander and staff as well as citywide patrols or divisions such as motorcycle or narcotics squads. Such rapport shall include daily contact on regular schedule.

The closing period of time at the end of summer and up to September 11 shall be a summary period during which there shall be sessions to close out any business for this year, to "think-tank" the programs and structure with recommendations for improvements, to set a basis for some form of Fall and Winter programs, and to allow for preliminary discussion of next year's programs.

Time:

The Park Attendant shall be hired so as to begin work in mid May and shall work through and including September 11, 1988. The person shall work on a full time basis. Now, there are two ways in which to provide such full time work. The first is to allow for a single employee who works on a full time but flexible schedule. That is, if it is necessary to work one day from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. and then to return and work from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m., then so be it. Another day might see a schedule from 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. In this case, one person works according to the schedule of programs and activities.

The second and more desirable situation is the hiring of one full time attendant per park and one part time attendant per park so as to allow for presence in the park from 9:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. seven days per week. This would be available as fifty full time hours and thirty-four part time hours or, more ideally, as two forty-two hour full times.

Practically speaking, however, there will probably not be a need for twelve hours at each park each of the seven days. Thus, any variation thereof is possible. The individuals can be hired both by Leisure Activities and by C.E.T.

Salary:

Salary range for C.E.T. employees is entirely within their structural prerogative. Salary range for a full time person hired by leisure activities should be $300.00 weekly. This is for seventeen weeks for a total of $5100.00. Overall figure is $45,900.

Resume:

Hiring shall be based on availability for full time performance, physical ability to perform in this field on this schedule, experience in leisure field and that must include diversification instead of pure athletic experiences, administrative ability or experience, supervisory ability, ability to work with children, communicative skills. Ideal market for employees would be colleges, teachers on summer recess, persons reentering the job market, or retired persons with these skills.

NEWSLETTER STAFF

Editor: Kathy Brennan
Graphics: Raquel Sweeney
Writers: Carin Lewis, Dee Ipsaro, Claire Ryan, Alice Soto, Maria Tuzzo
Contributors: Ted Conrad, Dean Howell, Randy Sanford, Vito Brunetti, and Bob Lewis
Advisor: Vito Brunetti

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Vito Brunetti
Chairman

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Maria Tuzzo
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Bob Murray
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Sgt. at Arms

Theodore Conrad
Historical Advisor

COMMITTEES:

COMMUNITY AWARENESS:
Carin Lewis

NEWSLETTER:
Kathy Brennan

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT:
Randy Sanford

ENVIRONMENT:
Anne Hart

COMMUNITY RELATIONS:
Mike Moloughney
Ernest Quintero